

Planning for Drainage Management

San Joaquin Valley Drainage Program

SJVDP developed *A Management Plan for Agricultural Subsurface Drainage and Related Problems on the Westside San Joaquin Valley* to manage drainage problems from 1990 to 2040 (SJVDP, 1990). Although the 1990 *Plan* was based on managing the problems in-valley for several decades without exporting drainage water and salts to the ocean, it also stated that, “ultimately, it may become necessary to remove salt from the Valley” (page 1 of the *Plan*).

SJVDP investigated treatment technology, but did not recommend it as a drainage management component because of technology and cost uncertainties. SJVDP did recommend, however, continuing treatment technology research, demonstration projects, and continued monitoring to assess the progress and efficacy of various management measures. (Sidebar on page 11 shows the key components of the SJVDP recommended plan.)

San Joaquin Valley Drainage Implementation Program

Federal/State agencies initiated the San Joaquin Valley Drainage Implementation Program in 1991 to pick up where SJVDP left off, following through on program recommendations (SJVDIP, 1991). Four federal agencies (the Bureau, USFWS, USGS, and Natural Resources Conservation Service) and four State agencies (DFA, DWR, DFG, and SWRCB) signed a MOU in December 1991. The agencies agreed to use SJVDP's 1990 *Plan* as the guide to correct the Valley's subsurface drainage problems. They agreed to work together to identify specific tasks and associated responsible parties, seek needed funding and authority, and set schedules to implement all components of the SJVDP 1990 *Plan*. Those signing the MOU recognized that the success of the program depended on local districts and irrigators carrying out effective drainage management measures. Because drainage is a regional problem, however, federal and State agencies needed to remain involved to coordinate efforts.

Figure 2 shows SJVDIP organization. Management Group, Committee of Local Interests, and BPC members are shown in Table 2. (DWR Director David Kennedy dissolved the SJVDIP Drainage Oversight Committee in August 1996 at the request of a majority of the members.)

The eight federal and State agencies in SJVDIP adopted a two-year work plan in 1993 and prepared a draft five-year plan for implementing 1990 *Plan* recommendations. The draft five-year plan identified actions that were: (1) implementable (source con-

trol, discharge to the River, and water for fish and wildlife), (2) in the development stage and required pilot studies (drainage reuse, modified evaporation ponds, and land retirement), or (3) in the research stage (groundwater management and drainage treatment). Funding needs were identified, but not funding sources.

Some growers and SJVDIP members did not accept the draft five-year plan. Objections focused on uncertainty over feasibility of the plan, regulatory control, practicality, cost, lack of an end point for salt, and the lack of a long-term solution. Concerns over regulatory control centered on forced compliance with unrealistic goals versus voluntary participation with economic incentives.

In response to these concerns, MG deferred implementing the draft five-year plan. Local workshops were planned for the four SJVDP subareas to obtain local input on the status and effectiveness of 1990 *Plan* recommendations and suggestions for other future actions. Results of the workshops are summarized in Chapter 6, Summary of Local Workshops.

A process was begun in 1995 to revise the MOU, develop a scope of work to reassess the 1990 *Plan* recommendations, and formulate a new drainage management plan with emphasis on managing salts in the Valley and a new evaluation of long-term solutions. *Drainage Management in the San Joaquin Valley - A Status Report* was prepared to help evaluate the 1990 *Plan* recommendations and current environmental conditions.

Members of the former SJVDIP Drainage Oversight Committee reviewed the revised MOU and scope of work. Major concern was expressed over new emphasis on finding a long-term or permanent solution to drainage and salt management problems by evaluating out-of-valley options. While acknowledging the need for revising and updating the 1990 *Plan* recommendations, the members asserted that the recommendations must be fully implemented before considering any out-of-valley measures. Additional concerns focused on inadequate funding, lack of identified funding sources, and inadequate planning for full public participation. In December 1996, MG decided not to adopt its draft revised MOU and not to proceed with out-of-valley solutions.